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WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING ARTICLE 21 OF THE CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Official development assistance and the role of women in development

Report by the Secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

1. At its tenth session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women requested that an analytical report, summarizing issues relating to the theme of women's role in development, be prepared by the Secretariat as a pre-session document for general circulation. It also requested that comments on the theme received from the specialized agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations be made available to the Committee. 1/ The present report has been prepared on the basis of this request.

2. The Convention itself does not mention the role of women in development nor the role of development assistance. Accordingly, reports of States parties do not provide information under either of those headings. States parties that are classified as developing countries tend to report on the implementation of the Convention in terms of its specific articles; however, much of what is done to implement the Convention in those countries is clearly concerned with women's role in development. Similarly, the role of development assistance, of which those countries might be recipients, tends to be dealt with in their reporting on the specific articles of the Convention. However, the wider issues of women in development have been considered in a number of United Nations and other intergovernmental forums and some general conclusions can be drawn about the process. Chapter I discusses some of the trends on the basis of the discussions in these forums.

3. Many of the States that provide development assistance are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC).* Most of the members of OECD are States parties to the Convention, and those that are not, have at least signed it.

4. While the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women does not explicitly refer to issues related to the role of women in development in the context of development assistance, article 2 (d) of the Convention provides that States parties should undertake "... to refrain from engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation". 2/ This could be interpreted to mean that the development agencies of State parties should increase their awareness of issues related to the role of women in development in order to avoid formulating development policies, programmes or projects that would discriminate against women.

5. In 1983, at its high-level meeting, DAC adopted the Guiding Principles to Aid Agencies for Supporting the Role of Women in Development. The Guiding Principles were revised in 1989 3/ in order to reflect the practical consequences for members of their commitment to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. 4/ Three monitoring reports on the implementation of the Revised Guiding Principles on Women in Development were prepared by DAC, in 1984, 1987 and 1989. Chapter II of the present report is based mainly on the findings of the "Third monitoring report" 5/ and provides

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*In May 1990, the members of DAC were: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and the European Economic Community.

an overview of the policies of the main donors and their initiatives to integrate gender planning into their development assistance activities in the period from mid-1987 to mid-1990.

6. As the organizations of the United Nations system cannot be parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, their operational activities are subject to review by the General Assembly and by their governing bodies. However, in accordance with the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 44/171 of 19 December 1989, the report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation on operational activities for development (A/46/206) contained a chapter on efforts of the United Nations system to integrate women in development. An addendum (A/46/206/Add.2, annex) provided further information. Based on the information contained in that report, chapter III provides an overview of the initiatives taken by the organizations of the United Nations system to integrate gender planning into their development activities.

I. ISSUES RELATED TO THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

7. Although the important role that women play in development has been widely recognized by donor countries, this awareness has not necessarily been translated into policies and planning for official development assistance. Strategies have to a great extent been conceived as gender-neutral and have not taken sufficiently into account the role of women in development. Research has clearly shown that projects that have not taken the role of women in development into account have had negative effects or even failed. 6/

8. In order to understand the mechanisms of development and to translate this knowledge into development assistance policies, the role of women's contributions to social, cultural and economic development has to be understood.

9. The United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, 1976-1985, highlighted issues related to the role of women in economic and social development. Over the years, awareness of these issues in development assistance has shifted from preparing specific programmes for women to bringing such issues into the mainstream of the planning and implementation of all projects and programmes. Policy makers have shifted their focus from welfare and family-oriented projects and programmes for women to policies based on the productive role of women. 7/ There has also been a shift from regarding women mainly as victims of development to recognizing them as significant actors in development. 8/

10. At the same time, when women have been recognized as actors in the development process, their economic participation in society has often been seen merely as an instrument for development in terms of economic growth, which has not necessarily led to an improvement in their own conditions. 7/

11. There is a growing consensus that all planning, including that of development assistance, should take into account the interests and priority concerns of low-income women in the recipient countries. Only after identifying their different interests and needs is it possible to incorporate them into planning. 7/ Non-governmental organizations, for instance, have been identified as playing a key role in empowering women, especially at the grass-roots level. 9/

II. OFFICIAL BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

A. Policy

12. As stated in the Revised Guiding Principles of 1989 and the monitoring reports on their implementation, the policies of the members of DAC are based primarily on the principle of integration: to include women's issues consciously in overall project design and to integrate women's contributions to economic and social development into all aid activities. In reality, however, projects related specifically to women's role in development have tended to marginalize women further. 5/

13. Owing to the considerable gender gap in such sectors as education, training, and credit schemes, however, all the members of DAC have agreed that it may be necessary to support activities aimed specifically at women and women's groups during a transitional period. This measure could be interpreted to be in accordance with the provisions of article 4 of the Convention.

B. Legislation and mandates

14. By 1990, all the members of DAC had adopted formal mandates regarding the participation of women in development, in line with the Revised Guiding Principles. 5/

15. Two members have enacted legislation, eight have adopted ministerial directives and seven have adopted internal guidelines. Member States of the European Economic Community (EEC) have also adopted a multilateral convention. An example of such legislation is that of the United States of America (where the concept of women's role in development was developed) whose mandate derives from what is termed the Percy Amendment, reflected in section 113 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1973, which was expanded in 1977 and 1978. That section of the law provides that bilateral development assistance programmes of the United States should give particular attention to programmes, projects and activities that integrate women into the national economies of developing countries. Funding of the Office of Women in Development of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was mandated by legislation in 1978. 10/ Congressional legislation was passed in 1988 and 1989 to earmark additional funds for increased efforts to deal with women's role in development. 5/

C. Plans of action

16. Although the policy lines and objectives of legislation and ministerial statements concerning women's role in development and official development assistance have remained general, they have been strengthened by internal guidelines accompanied by plans of action, which tend to be more specific. Plans of action have been found to be essential by members of DAC to implement the policies outlined in the mandates, since they help staff of development agencies to consider gender issues in all development activities. Consequently, all but two members have adopted plans of action to implement policies related to women's role in development.

17. A few members have gone further by introducing specific requirements for monitoring the implementation of their plans of action, such as the appointment of a gender-analysis team or the institution of annual progress reports

for presentation to senior management. Further examples are the incorporation of monitoring procedures in the plans of action or the obligation to report on the implementation of the mandates to their respective parliaments.

18. A few countries have developed specific guidelines on women's role in development according to sectors in which the role of women is critical (particularly agriculture, health, water and the environment).

19. Some members have issued manuals on women's role in development, which contain sections on key sectors. Others have integrated criteria on women's role in development into their guidelines for general sectors. Some countries, however, do not have such guidelines.

D. Administrative measures

20. In order to facilitate the implementation of policies related to women's role in development, all members have made administrative adjustments. There is at least one permanent adviser on women's role in development in each development aid agency, although in many cases they work on women's issues on a part-time basis only.

21. Twelve members have set up units on the issue, composed of several professionals and supporting staff and strategically located so as to be able to provide expertise to departments and divisions involved in policy planning and operations. In the case of the United States, all bureaux within USAID must develop, implement and monitor action plans on women's role in development as called for by congressional legislation.

22. In order to back up their units on the issue, 10 members have set up one or more of the following structures:

(a) Steering committees. Four countries have set up steering committees composed of senior staff from the policy and operations departments who are responsible for overseeing the implementation of policy related to women's role in development. Such institutionalized support at the highest level suggests a strong commitment and facilitates the work of the units;

(b) Interdepartmental task forces. Nine countries have set up interdepartmental task forces composed of staff members from all the policy and operations departments. The staff members then act as liaison officers on the subject of women in development in their regional or sectoral divisions. The task forces are a way of ensuring that the units' activities extend to all departments, divisions, bureaux and sections;

(c) Ad hoc working groups. Three countries have set up ad hoc working groups on specific issues related to women's role in development.

E. Staff resources at headquarters

23. Issues related to women in development are usually handled by the development agencies of members in two associated ways:

(a) By a centralized unit, working either exclusively on issues related to women in development or as part of a wider responsibility for social issues. Among the 12 development agencies that have such units, the staffing ranges from one single part-time officer to 16 full-time officers, the most common being 1 to 4 officers;

(b) Through assignments related to women in development that are given to officers in different departments or divisions. Twelve members have assigned tasks related to women in development to staff from other divisions. However, judging from members' reports, the ad hoc support to these officers has been erratic. It has been more effective in development agencies that have been able to carry out extensive training programmes; the system depends greatly on the personal commitment of the officers concerned.

24. In order to ensure that all aspects of women's role in development are taken into consideration in all development assistance activities, an improvement in the ability and the commitment of a larger number of staff to deal with the subject is required.

25. Changing the attitude to issues related to women's role in development among the staff of development agencies has in some cases, proved to be a slow process. Many officers still take a social/welfare and "special interest" approach to such issues, which they may have forgotten to address in their daily activities. 5/

26. Shortage of staff has been a major constraint, and the lack of experts has meant that they have tended to remain centralized rather than being placed within specific programmes. The interdepartmental task forces have been unable to perform the outreach role of providing advice that they should have had. 5/

F. Staff resources overseas

27. In the Revised Guiding Principles, it is stated that members should ensure that expertise on women's role in development is available at their resident missions in recipient countries in order that activities can be monitored at all stages of each project, and dialogue with local authorities and feedback facilitated. Yet, only five donors within the DAC membership have posted such staff overseas, the number of which ranges from four full-time experts to 70 part-time experts. Five other members have assigned tasks related to women's role in development to some of their overseas staff as part of other wider responsibilities.

G. Training of personnel

28. Eleven members have instituted training in women's role in development for the staff of their development agencies, in line with the Revised Guiding Principles, in which it was recommended that such training programmes should be introduced routinely for all staff members. A further two countries and EEC reported that training programmes were in preparation and would be implemented soon. Four countries reported that they had organized training on an irregular basis. One country had still not been able to provide any such training for its staff.

29. In three of the 11 countries that have instituted training, programmes have been introduced to raise staff awareness of gender issues. In the other eight countries, where training programmes on women's role in development have been held since 1984, training schemes have become more sophisticated, moving from the general sensitization of staff to more operational courses on the implementation of policy in specific sectors. Tools have also been introduced for analysing projects from the perspective of gender.

30. Only three members have made gender training compulsory for some categories of personnel, particularly senior management.

31. Seven members have incorporated such training into the general training programmes on development assistance that are given to the new staff of their development agencies.

32. The monitoring reports indicate that it is difficult to conclude whether such training has increased the responsiveness of development agencies to women's issues, since in many cases it had been introduced too recently for an evaluation to have taken place. However, in countries where no training had been offered to staff, women's issues were still approached from a social/welfare perspective, if considered at all; the economic role of women was still largely ignored. 5/

H. Research

33. Fifteen members reported having commissioned research studies on gender issues, in many cases applied research, directly related to development projects. In some countries, gender-related research of a more general nature was undertaken not only by universities, but also by institutions specialized in development research and linked to development agencies. Four donor countries did not commission research on women's issues.

34. In the Revised Guiding Principles, it is stated that past research on women in society has been fairly descriptive and has tended to analyse women as a homogeneous group. In order "to provide valuable insight to the applied aspects of development assistance", future research should focus on the dynamics aspects of gender relations in a social-economic context. 3/ Although 11 members reported that they had consequently put more emphasis on gender relationships in some of their research studies, most members had no formal guidelines to ensure this objective. Eight (over one third) members did not indicate whether they took measures to ensure gender differentiation in research or not, which suggests that there is a need to emphasize further the importance of gender-differentiated research.

35. In order to promote the exchange of information and to avoid duplication, members are encouraged to provide the secretariat of DAC with annual bibliographies of major research activities on women's issues, for distribution to all the other members.

36. The DAC Expert Group on Women in Development has established a methodology for reporting statistics on aid activities oriented to women, since the development of gender-differentiated data is important for the understanding of women's issues. So far, 11 members have introduced this methodology and five members have taken steps towards introducing it; three have not yet initiated the process.

37. Seven members have established special funds and some members fund projects of non-governmental organizations that are designed specifically for women.

I. Policy dialogue and project planning

38. Concerning cooperation on bilateral development assistance, members reported that policy discussions on women's issues with partner countries usually take place during the annual consultations on the recipient's development strategies and during project planning. Only in exceptional cases have experts on women's role in development been included in the members' negotiating teams at the annual consultations. Women's issues are therefore not given

priority in the policy discussions and further efforts are needed to ensure that such experts, from both the donor side and the recipient side, are included in all bilateral policy discussions and project/programme planning.

39. Efforts to ensure that gender analysis is applied at the planning stage and throughout the implementation of projects were reported to have been uneven and varied widely among members. As a result, project analyses had failed to take the perspective of women into account. 5/

40. However, women's issues have increasingly been given priority at the project level, for preparation, monitoring and evaluation. In cases where experts on women's role in development have been appointed to head development assistance missions, the opportunities for women's participation have increased.

41. It was reported that local coordination groups on women in development had been organized in some developing countries. It was suggested that efforts should be made to include these groups in planning for bilateral development assistance. At the same time, close coordination and cooperation should be organized between the units on women in development in the development agencies of members.

J. Monitoring and evaluation

42. The collection of gender-disaggregated data throughout a project or programme is important in ensuring that gender-disaggregated evaluations are carried out effectively.

43. The DAC Expert Group on Women in Development found that, while the input of members, in terms of women's issues, to development programmes and projects was considerable, there had been little measurement of output and impact. It was considered that it was in the interest of members to monitor and evaluate projects, in order to ensure that investments were producing results and to assist in formulating future policies. Yet few members had instituted a monitoring system to measure the impact of the integration of women's issues into their development agencies. 5/

K. Promotion of policies related to women's role in development in multilateral organizations

44. Fifteen members stated that they had taken action to promote policies related to women's role in development in multilateral organizations at the institutional and operational levels, including such forums as the Development Committee and the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank and the regional development banks, and the the governing bodies of specialized agencies of the United Nations. Nine members reported that they had instructed the representatives of their missions to international bodies to support statements and resolutions drawing attention to women's role in development.

45. Nine members said that they were supporting the women's units of international organizations, by providing administrative and financial support; for example, by funding advisers or lending expertise. Thirteen members reported that they had provided voluntary contributions or special grants for activities undertaken by United Nations organizations that were oriented to women in development.

III. MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT

46. Apart from the Commission on the Status of Women and its secretariat and the Division for the Advancement of Women, United Nations Office at Vienna, an increasing number of units and focal points for the integration of women into development have been established in the organizations of the United Nations system. This has been done to ensure that the subject is incorporated into the policy framework of programmes, including development assistance programmes, and in all operational activities of the different organizations. At present there are 80 such focal points within the United Nations system; however, many of them have other professional duties as well, which is an apparent drawback to their effectiveness. 11/

47. The training of United Nations personnel is considered to be of great importance for the promotion of issues related to women in development. Although little evaluation has been carried out of such training programmes, interviews with different United Nations entities indicate that United Nations personnel still lack sufficient awareness and knowledge of gender issues. 11/

48. Since women in their role as producers are often assumed to be concentrated in the family and the informal sector, large-scale projects often neglect the role of women as development agents. Members observed that greater inter-agency collaboration was necessary to create United Nations programmes that targeted women at the grass-roots level.

49. Among the steps taken to promote an awareness of issues in connection with women's role in development in the operational activities of the organizations of the United Nations system are the following:

(a) The training of United Nations personnel and national counterparts;

(b) The preparation of guidelines for the formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects;

(c) At the country level, the inclusion of specific sections on women in development in the project documents of some organizations.

50. The integration of women's roles into United Nations development activities has been evaluated by several organizations. Among the conclusions reached are the following:

(a) Women are seldom considered as a target group in development projects and their special needs are seldom taken into account in project design and planning;

(b) There is a lack of recognition and awareness of women's role in development owing to a lack of training. Consequently, guidelines, instructions and procedures on the subject have not been implemented;

(c) There is a lack of mandatory reporting on the subject and on its implementation in many organizations of the United Nations. 11/

51. National statistical services still collect too few gender-disaggregated data on the economic contribution, employment, productivity, wages and incomes of women. Gender-disaggregated industrial and agricultural statistics (rural

income, production and access to resources and services) need to be made generally available. In order to facilitate access to such statistics, the Statistical Office of the United Nations, with support from the United Nations Population Fund, has developed the Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT). 11/

52. At the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, held at Jomtien, Thailand, in March 1990, by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank, the constraints on women's access to education were discussed. One of the main themes of the world conference on women to be held in 1995 is the eradication of female literacy by the year 2000. 11/

53. Most United Nations organizations have programme components dealing with aspects of the employment, self-employment or training of women. Development programmes on women and employment are being designed by mainly UNDP, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Programmes and projects to support women as agricultural producers are becoming more frequent, executed mainly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and also the World Food Programme. Many agencies, especially UNDP, ILO, the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, are tackling the question of women's access to credit. 11/

54. ILO also focuses on work-related health hazards in connection with women. Organizations dealing with women's health and nutrition are UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Bank, which emphasize primary health care and community-based health systems, as well as water and sanitation programmes. 11/

55. Recognizing the key role of women in relation to the environment, the United Nations Environment Programme and many other United Nations entities have started to implement programmes on women and the environment. The impact of these programmes seems to be limited, however, because of the limited resources allocated to them. 11/

56. The World Bank established a division for women in 1987. More recently the Bank established a full-time coordinator on women in development in each of its four regions. A recent report shows some progress: one out of five operations approved in 1989 included specific recommendations on issues related to women in development. The lending operations of the World Bank are also giving increased attention to women. 12/

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/46/38), chap. VI, para. 403.

2/ General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex, of 18 December 1979.

3/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Revised Guiding Principles on Women in Development, 1989 (Paris, 1990).

4/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

5/ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Third monitoring report on the implementation of the DAC Revised Guiding Principles on Women in Development (1989)", DAC/WID (90)2 (Paris, 1990).

6/ Winifred Weekes Vagliani, "The integration of women in development projects", Development Centre Papers (Paris, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1985).

7/ Caroline O. N. Moser, "Gender planning in the Third World: meeting practical and strategical gender needs", World Development, vol. 17, No. 11 (1989), pp. 1799-1825.

8/ "Effective mobilization and integration of women for development: report of the Secretary-General" (A/46/150, 10 September 1991).

9/ "Measures for collaboration between ECA's Programme for the Integration of Women in Development (PIWD) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)", paper prepared for the 9th Meeting of the African Regional Co-ordinating Committee for the Integration of Women in Development, Niamey, Niger, 3-4 April 1988 (E/ECA/ATRCW/ARCC IX/88/6, 18 March 1988).

10/ I. Tinker, Women in Washington (Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications, 1983).

11/ "Operational activities of the United Nations system" (A/46/206/Add.2, E/1991/93/Add.2), annex; "Report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation on Operational Activities".

12/ B. Herz and K. Subbarao, "Enhancing the economic role of women in development", in Development Issues: Presentations to the 39th Meeting of the Development Committee, Washington, D.C., September 24, 1990 (Washington, D.C.).